

2014-2015 AESN Case Study



School: Harold Bishop Elementary **District:** #36 Surrey

Area of Focus: Student Level

Inquiry Team Members: Louanna Anderson, Gina Challenger, Brenda Hrycan, Deanna Nilson, Stephen Redding, Par Sahota, Monika Taylor

Question/Focus: How will hosting a cultural inquiry benefit our Aboriginal kids self and cultural identity while connecting all learners with Aboriginal Culture? How can we as educators support our students in developing a deeper understanding of where they are from and how their particular aboriginal culture is unique from other cultures?

Scanning: Our Aboriginal kids were very keen and energetic when they arrived to our group. They were always interested in what would be happening next. They listened to many story books, story tellers, guest speakers, participated in cedar twinning, weaving, beading, cooperative activities, and other school wide events. They are making connections and strengthening their cultural identity because now they all readily self-identify and share some details of the particular Aboriginal group that their family is from. Each child is able to articulate what makes Aboriginal culture unique from others.

Focus: We wanted to know infusing cultural learning would impact our kids overall attitudes towards learning and their cultural and personal identity. We know that a strong sense of identity positively impacts children by providing them with a greater sense of value and empowerment. This inquiry has allowed our Aboriginal learners to benefit from a greater awareness of their own cultural beliefs and practices. Similarly for non-Aboriginal learners this inquiry work has allowed our students to develop a greater understanding and appreciation for Aboriginal Culture. Additionally as these children have made connections between their culture and Aboriginal cultures their personal and cultural identity is strengthened. Furthermore, by sharing literature with students and colleagues we have gently initiated the conversation about Residential Schools and are creating cultural understanding of our Aboriginal history in our province and are moving in a positive direction towards reconciliation.

Hunch: Our student's directly involved in the inquiry project are building strong relationships with professionals that advocate for Aboriginal Education. Classroom teachers continue to embed Aboriginal content into their curriculum but what we have noticed is that the students involved in this inquiry are more readily and regularly sharing their cultural knowledge and engaging in discussions and lessons.

New professional learning: We explored the District Aboriginal Education Centre and discussed ways to embed Aboriginal Education into curriculum. Our team has arranged for several school wide activities for both staff and students including storytelling and crafts. We have learned that this new learning is best received when we create 'a buzz' and provide opportunities for everyone to learn more about Aboriginal Culture.

Taking action: We hosted several cultural presentations, drumming and storytelling. We connected CRTs to the District Aboriginal Resource Center and reminded staff of a variety of Aboriginal literature we already have in our library. We recognized Hobiye at an assembly and brought awareness to the cultural events that take place in our community. Overall this strategy has worked well and has been warmly received by students and staff. They all seem keen to participate in events and learn more about Aboriginal culture.

Checking: To document our learning we have taken note of anecdotal comments as well as completed a mindmap both pre and post inquiry. These murals are full of colourful illustrations and diagrams as well as meaningful vocabulary and connections.

Reflections/Advice: We have learned that educators are busy people who generally enjoy learning about Aboriginal culture and simply often need a colleague to plan simple new opportunities to make this happen. Likewise, the children involved in our inquiry focus group were very keen to connect with their peers with whom they share a culture. These children all demonstrated pride in their culture and it is evident their identity has been positively impacted.